

Bard

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Bard

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the hair drenched dry

a scattered rhyme

a chill in the shoulder as if winter meat

eyes upside down

you can't have concerts in the evening just the night

expand the topic to include

what is beside the point

then you're Aeschylus and classic and poetry

born of marble randomness

No One Made This Stone

or everybody did before it got

to your hand Praxiteles

Pygmalion you poet

you cut the words do they not bleed

you molded words together and they talked back

Everybody Made Language

even made-up words were lurking for Joyce or Carroll to find

them

to wake them up

writing is always about its own coming into being

there is no plot but a person in trouble

the person is language the trouble is language

it gets into you and you can't get away from what it says

because once you hear it it says itself in you

you are language

you are in trouble

and we're always in trouble the minute we open our mouths

speech is sunshine is radiant energy is nuclear radiation

words are scars

word scars

in the sun wall

a cave of light

lazy manifesto

without a canoe the lake can't know itself

this means you

there is no waiting in this world

it all just happened

happened just now

catch up with it

quick

where did I go to sleep to wake up here

writing in dim can't see the words

but they see me

no waiting

writing in the light of a dawn I have to resist

A Word Forgives Me As I Say It

that is my best hope

credulous I believe every word I say

man hopes he can read in daylight what he night-wrote

maybe by day it says a different thing

words have to sleep too

girls in the rafters turn boys into doves

think about grasses a prairie a lawn

think about how big everything is

how far away

how far away this is

even now the word is far from the eye

the ear

I miss you terribly

but I don't even know

what don't I know

dizzy at the top of the stairs

while climbing the stairs avoid certain thoughts

an image could trip you

like stepping on a cat on the stairs in the dark

and fall

an image could do it

if I am one day shot down on the steps of the Bourse

you'll know that a single image did it

an image has strong hands

an image has almost perfect aim
this wooden hill
so many have fallen
trying to enter this citadel
up there up here
the victors vanquished
wood yields a little iron much less
on the dark side of the house
still cold
no honey
no waiting ever
certain people I must not think about
the r/l confusion Tsalagi/Cherokee Japanese
if I think them I am sure to fall
who is it I must not think
who must I be to do or void such thinking
if I think then I will fall
unthought words are best

they lapse from consciousness

Into Pure Saying

and I motto myself gladly

gladly you mother marry me

I am the last particular

I am the man at the side of the road

I made no sign

you passed by without thinking maybe

without stopping

moving swiftly into the past

years and years before,

language is a tailwind anyhow

language blows us through the world

the spaces where the gods live

the spaces they left to us

for play

language is a wind that carries us

I have a proposition for you called me

liberty costs less than bondage

how much these chains

I can't get any cheaper

swiving away in the orchard

women

till something happens

and the apple blossoms

radioactive ash from Russian fires

over Europe

nobody knows, but nobody knows nobody knows

I am all afternoon and dawn

I wish we could sleep and dream ten times a day

we'd get so much more work done

and kill fewer brothers and sisters

sleeping men can't kill,

wait for the darling of the tribe

and put her or him to sleep

bid her dream a dream with room in it

for everyone,
the sleep of celebrities is a pinkish doze
I want to dream more
I was an island you landed on
so much for me
so many don't survive the night
write with night-ink
mosquito bite
why are they grieving?
so many young women lost in the childerness,
can't believe anything worth doing that's not about them
how can you know what people want
even if they tell you
with a tittering sound hierodules have fled the temple
what kind of gods attract such worshippers
as these grey souls still left
please revise your gods carefully—
a real iconoclast wants to destroy language

when that's gone all the images
will shimmer for half an hour then disappear—
language is thick with images
and every image someone worships.
It is almost unethical to speak.

13 August 2010

= = = = =

The last available postcard to mother
has been carried off by some crows—
they love to read the things we think
we're saying, comparing them with our
true thoughts all day long that they—
of all our local fauna—know how to read.
A crow reading you is your best critic—
they like poetry too, on account of
its sheer ambiguity, thus relative
honesty to the stuff going on in
the poet's heart. Yes, they hear the heart.

14 August 2010

= = = = =

Poetry naturally promiscuous—

while busy chatting up one word

the poet checks out the word coming up the street,

loves them all best, every one,

one after the other. That scoundrel Joyce!

14 August 2010

= = = = =

My heart not as high yet as the morning.

Give me an hour to climb with it

over the Babel terraces to the true mind.

14 August 2010

BABEL*

Babel was not a punishment. God looked down and saw these brave people trying to build something with mud and stone and sticks and bricks, a high house that led nowhere, really. In his goodness, he rewarded their energy and aspiration, opened their ears from aloft, and poured down language on them and into them. Each mind heard it in its own way, each tongue pronounced it as it could or would. God smiled, and said Let them build with words.

Or:

Maybe it wasn't God. The builders, who had said We will build a tower to reach heaven!, maybe they and their tower really did reach heaven. And when they climbed to the top and found heaven empty, they cried out a great cry of fear and loss and

* Babel must mean 'god gate.' Through language runs the direct path to knowing god. If god be truly transcendent, as in the Judeo-Christian tradition, then everything that can be said about god is true, and in the same way.

banishment to find that they were alone in heaven, as they were alone on earth. And that great cry or howl or shout was heard by all the multitude of workers down below. And each ear heard with its own equipment, its own habitual disposition, and each tongue spoke as it would or could, so that the cry, heard and responded to, became language.

14 August 2010

= = = = =

Cool beautiful morning in a hot summer. Sitting on deck. On lawn a woodchuck standing up on his haunches nibbling a cookie. Something alarms him, and he runs back to his den. No sign of what scared him. Cars go by. Sun caught in the trees. I see far overhead a huge bird mildly floating: eagle. Let this be enough news for today.

14 August 2010

= = = = =

As if the thought of it was enough
the blue thing pretending to be a word
your ear caught but your mind not quite,
now it sounds still in shadow—
if you walked over there, into those trees
and kept going, I think you'd get to understand.

14 August 2010

= = = = =

The ancient formality
of the moon
rising.

14 August 2010

PRAYER

Press their boundaries down with your blue feet

With your yellow throat speak food for the living and the dead

In your red heart an open door—snow outside, come in

Lift them to the quiet mind with your green hands.

15 August 2010

IN BLESSED CONTINGENCY AWAKE

To be protected is to be
the subject matter of a prayer
someone is praying

to be on the sky side
yourself be law
listen to that kindling catch

woke a different period
any I would be a lie
hover over the water

sing to the rocky outcrops
in the park as if they were sheep
and you were a shepherd once

any you is almost true
don't know is a bird
in every weather perches and soars

who was it woke then
in that used-to-be bed
who hauled up the anchor

who is the sea in your story
everything is at once complaining
sleep is better than perjury

just this morning quiet
as if silence were something to say
and someone said it

every line lies deep engraved

no one know what the picture shows

clear things often make no sense

it's not enough to be accurate

you have to be there

and there is no easy lodging

get mad in all the children

their hopes disguised as fears

nec spe nec metu on the wall

don't have to say it all at once

weary wasted wise and full of wanting

slim gravestones of the artist class

Bigod He Couldn't Stop Talking

then the sun rose inside out

is that the ground they're walking on?

it is time for the absolute or
there is no time for what has no time
and the absolute is always something else

less than itself because it can be named
go back to your lusters and glamors man
lust at least is easy to unclothe

one Mass a year is all the church it needs
turkeys walking this way out of the woods
people own land only as compared to other people

the land itself knows nothing of our fantasies
it knows nothing of possession
it possesses itself and we walk in and out

owning things is a dance we do

to one another, the mine and thine of any music

moves us, and selling land is suicide

turkey talk told this

holy wilderness winds through all our settlements

no boulevard without its wolf

so much here for them to come inspect

close close the gentle clucking

burst of a hundred word compressed to klang

record the world then slow it down and listen

it's all words all the time

everybody that there is is speaking

just live at the right speed to hear

is it a diagnosis or a real disease

what kind of gnosis will give humans ease

the animals their qabbalah rehearse

alphabet by alephbeth

till they grow wings and fly away

up there into the suspicious air

hunting for new boundaries to cross

as just now they leapt beyond Natura

what other country waits across every line

sand between fingers and toes and still fall

the center of all things is a sleeping man

*

and then the pen ran out of ink

he wakes and sees me looking in the window at him

thinks he sees a human face but that's not me

it's a composition of grey brown sparrow on the rail

his sleepy eyes mistake for one dull face

when the birds fly away he thinks he's conquered

sleep goes back to sleep

the dreams can wait

the waitress sips her tea before the morning rush.

15 August 2010

= = = = =

Old families are armored against sudden enthusiasms

there's always an uncle who fell off that perch

and anybody you meet is so plainly after something

still it's a nice life cautiously racing

vintage Dusenbergs and breaking the odd

ankle at Vail, whatever happens

you always have cousins, they always have money.

15 August 2010